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THE TRUTH.

I.

THROUGH millions of ages, by countless efforts to satisfy his wants, to gratify his passions, his appetites, man slowly developed his brain, changed two of his feet into hands and forced into the darkness of his brain a few gleams and glimmerings of reason. He was hindered by ignorance, by fear, by mistakes, and he advanced only as he found the truth—the absolute facts. Through countless years he has groped and crawled and struggled and climbed and stumbled toward the light. He has been hindered and delayed and deceived by augurs, and prophets—by popes and priests—he has been betrayed by saints, mislead by apostles and Christs, frightened by devils and ghosts—enslaved by chiefs and kings—robbed by altars and thrones. In the name of education his mind has been filled with mistakes, with miracles, and lies,

with the impossible, the absurd and infamous. In the name of religion he has been taught humility and arrogance, love and hatred, forgiveness and revenge.

But the world is changing. We are tired of barbarian bibles and savage creeds.

Nothing is greater—nothing is of more importance than to find, amid the errors and darkness of this life, a shining truth.

Truth is the intellectual wealth of the world.

The noblest of occupations is to search for truth.

Truth is the foundation, the superstructure, and the glittering dome of progress.

Truth is the mother of joy. Truth civilizes, ennobles, and purifies. The grandest ambition that can enter the soul is to know the truth.

Truth gives man the greatest power for good. Truth is sword and shield. It is the sacred light of the soul.

The man who finds a truth lights a torch.

How is Truth to be Found?

By investigation, experiment and reason.

Every human being should be allowed to investigate to the extent of his desire—his ability. The literature of the world should be open to him—nothing prohibited, sealed or hidden. No subject can be too sacred to be understood. Each person should be allowed to reach his own conclusions and to speak his honest thought.

He who threatens the investigator with punishment here, or hereafter, is an enemy of the human race. And he who tries to bribe the investigator with the promise of eternal joy is a traitor to his fellow-men.

There is no real investigation without freedom—freedom from the fear of gods and men.

So, all investigation—all experiment—should be pursued in the light of reason.

Every man should be true to himself—true to the inward light. Each man, in the laboratory of his own mind, and for himself

alone, should test the so-called facts—the theories of all the world. Truth, *in accordance with his reason*, should be his guide and master. To love the truth, thus perceived, is mental virtue—intellectual purity This is true manhood. This is freedom.

To throw away your reason at the command of churches, popes, parties, kings or gods, is to be a serf, a slave.

It is not simply the right, but it is the duty of every man to think—to investigate for himself—and every man who tries to prevent this by force or fear, is doing all he can to degrade and enslave his fellow-men.

Every Man should be Mentally Honest.

He should preserve as his most precious jewel the perfect veracity of his soul.

He should examine all questions presented to his mind, without prejudice,—unbiased by hatred or love—by desire or fear. His object and his only object should be to find the truth. He knows, if he listens to reason,

that truth is not dangerous and that error is. He should weigh the evidence, the arguments, in honest scales—scales that passion or interest cannot change. He should care nothing for authority—nothing for names, customs or creeds—nothing for anything that his reason does not say is true.

Of his world he should be the sovereign, and his soul should wear the purple. From his dominions should be banished the hosts of force and fear.

He should be Intellectually Hospitable.

Prejudice, egotism, hatred, contempt, disdain, are the enemies of truth and progress.

The real searcher after truth will not receive the old because it is old, or reject the new because it is new. He will not believe men because they are dead, or contradict them because they are alive. With him an utterance is worth the truth, the reason it contains, without the slightest regard to the

author. He may have been a king or serf—a philosopher or servant,—but the utterance neither gains nor loses in truth or reason. Its value is absolutely independent of the fame or station of the man who gave it to the world.

Nothing but falsehood needs the assistance of fame and place, of robes and mitres, of tiaras and crowns.

The wise, the really honest and intelligent, are not swayed or governed by numbers—by majorities.

They accept what they really believe to be true. They care nothing for the opinions of ancestors, nothing for creeds, assertions and theories, unless they satisfy the reason.

In all directions they seek for truth, and when found, accept it with joy—accept it in spite of preconceived opinions—in spite of prejudice and hatred.

This is the course pursued by wise and honest men, and no other course is possible for them.

In every department of human endeavor men are seeking for the truth—for the facts. The statesman reads the history of the world, gathers the statistics of all nations to the end that his country may avoid the mistakes of the past. The geologist penetrates the rocks in search of facts—climbs mountains, visits the extinct craters, traverses islands and continents that he may know something of the history of the world. He wants the truth.

The chemist, with crucible and retort, with countless experiments, is trying to find the qualities of substances—to ravel what nature has woven.

The great mechanics dwell in the realm of the real. They seek by natural means to conquer and use the forces of nature. They want the truth—the actual facts.

The physicians, the surgeons, rely on observation, experiment and reason. They become acquainted with the human body—with muscle, blood and nerve—with the

wonders of the brain. They want nothing but the truth.

And so it is with the students of every science. On every hand they look for facts, and it is of the utmost importance that they give to the world the facts they find.

Their courage should equal their intelligence. No matter what the dead have said or the living believe, they should tell what they know. They should have intellectual courage.

If it be good for man to find the truth—good for him to be intellectually honest and hospitable, then it is good for others to know the truths thus found.

Every man should have the courage to give his honest thought. This makes the finder and publisher of truth a public benefactor.

Those who prevent, or try to prevent the expression of honest thought, are the foes of civilization—the enemies of truth. Nothing can exceed the egotism and impudence of the

man who claims the right to express his thought and denies the same right to others.

It will not do to say that certain ideas are sacred, and that man has not the right to investigate and test these ideas for himself.

Who knows that they are sacred? Can anything be sacred to us that we do not know to be true?

For many centuries free speech has been an insult to God. Nothing has been more blasphemous than the expression of honest thought. For many ages the lips of the wise were sealed. The torches that truth had lighted, that courage carried and held aloft, were extinguished with blood.

Truth has always been in favor of free speech—has always asked to be investigated—has always longed to be known and understood. Freedom, discussion, honesty, investigation and courage are the friends and allies of truth. Truth loves the light and the open field. It appeals to the senses—to the judgment, the reason, to all the higher and nobler

faculties and powers of the mind. It seeks to calm the passions, to destroy prejudice and to increase the volume and intensity of reason's flame.

It does not ask man to cringe or crawl. It does not desire the worship of the ignorant or the prayers and praises of the frightened.

It says to every human being, "Think for yourself. Enjoy the freedom of a god and have the goodness and the courage to express your honest thought."

Why should we pursue the truth? and why should we investigate and reason? and why should we be mentally honest and hospitable? and why should we express our honest thoughts?

To this there is but one answer: for the benefit of mankind.

The brain must be developed. The world must think. Speech must be free. The world must learn that credulity is not a virtue and that no question is settled until reason is fully satisfied.

By these means man will overcome many of the obstructions of nature. He will cure or avoid many diseases. He will lessen pain. He will lengthen, ennoble and enrich life. In every direction he will increase his power. He will satisfy his wants, gratify his tastes. He will put roof and raiment, food and fuel, home and happiness within the reach of all.

He will drive want and crime from the world. He will destroy the serpents of fear, the monsters of superstition. He will become intelligent and free, honest and serene.

The monarch of the skies will be dethroned —the flames of hell will be extinguished. Pious beggars will become honest and useful men. Hypocrisy will collect no tolls from fear, lies will not be regarded as sacred, this life will not be sarcrificed for another, human beings will love each other instead of gods, men will do right, not for the sake of reward in some other world, but for the sake of happiness here. Man will find that Nature is the

only revelation, and that he, by his own efforts, must learn to read the stories told by star and cloud, by rock and soil, by sea and stream, by rain and fire, by plant and flower, by life in all its curious forms, and all the things and forces of the world.

When he reads these stories, these records, he will know that man must rely on himself, —that the supernatural does not exist, and that man must be the providence of man.

It is impossible to conceive of an argument against the freedom of thought—against maintaining your self-respect and preserving the spotless and stainless veracity of the soul.

II.

ALL that I have said seems to be true—almost self-evident,—and you may ask who it is that says slavery is better than liberty. Let me tell you.

All the popes and priests, all the orthodox churches and clergymen, say that they have a revelation from God.

The Protestants say that it is the duty of every person to read, to understand, and to believe this revelation—that a man should use his reason; but if he honestly concludes that the Bible is not a revelation from God, and dies with that conclusion in his mind, he will be tormented forever. They say:—"Read," and then add: "Believe, or be damned."

"No matter how unreasonable the Bible may appear to you, you must believe. No matter how impossible the miracles may seem, you must believe. No matter how

cruel the laws, your heart must approve them all!"

This is what the church calls the liberty of thought.

We read the bible under the scowl and threat of God. We read by the glare of hell. On one side is the devil, with the instruments of torture in his hands. On the other, God, ready to launch the infinite curse. And the Church says to the readers: "You are free to decide. God is good, and he gives you the liberty to choose."

The Popes and the Priests say to the poor people: "You need not read the Bible. You cannot understand it. That is the reason it is called a revelation. We will read it for you, and you must believe what we say. We carry the key of hell. Contradict us and you will become eternal convicts in the prison of God."

This is the freedom of the Catholic church.

And all these priests and clergymen insist that the Bible is superior to human reason—

that it is the duty of man to accept it—to believe it, whether he really thinks it is true or not, and without the slightest regard to evidence or reason.

It is his duty to cast out from the temple of his soul the goddess Reason, and bow before the coiled serpent of Fear.

This is what the church calls virtue.

Under these conditions what can thought be worth? The brain, swept by the sirocco of God's curse, becomes a desert.

But this is not all.

To compel man to desert the standard of Reason, the Church does not entirely rely on the threat of eternal pain to be endured in another world, but holds out the reward of everlasting joy.

To those who believe, it promises the endless ecstacies of heaven. If it cannot frighten, it will bribe. It relies on fear and hope.

A religion, to command the respect of intelligent men, should rest on a foundation of established facts. It should appeal, not to

passion, not to hope and fear, but to the judgment. It should ask that all the faculties of the mind, all the senses, should assemble and take counsel together, and that its claims be passed upon and tested without prejudice, without fear, in the calm of perfect candor.

But the church cries: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Without this belief there is no salvation. Salvation is the reward for belief.

Belief is, and forever must be, the result of evidence. A promised reward is not evidence. It sheds no intellectual light. It establishes no fact, answers no objection, and dissipates no doubt.

Is it honest to offer a reward for belief?

The man who gives money to a judge or juror for a decision or verdict is guilty of a crime. Why? Because he induces the judge, the juror to decide, not according to the law, to the facts, the right, but according to the bribe.

The bribe is not evidence.

So, the promise of Christ to reward those who will believe is a bribe. It is an attempt to make a promise take the place of evidence. He who says that he believes, and does this for the sake of the reward, corrupts his soul.

Suppose I should say that at the centre of the earth there is a diamond one hundred miles in diameter, and that I would give ten thousand dollars to any man who would believe my statement. Could such a promise be regarded as evidence?

Intelligent people would ask not for rewards, but reasons. Only hypocrites would ask for the money.

Yet, according to the New Testament, Christ offered a reward to those who would believe, and this promised reward was to take the place of evidence. When Christ made this promise he forgot, ignored or held in contempt the rectitude of a brave, free and natural soul.

The declaration that salvation is the reward for belief is inconsistent with mental freedom,

and could have been made by no man who thought that evidence sustained the slightest relation to belief.

Every sermon in which men have been told that they could save their souls by believing, has been an injury. Such sermons dull the moral sense and subvert the true conception of virtue and duty.

The true man, when asked to believe, asks for evidence. The true man, who asks another to believe, offers evidence.

But this is not all.

In spite of the threat of eternal pain—of the promise of everlasting joy, unbelievers increased, and the churches took another step. The churches said to the unbelievers, the heretics: "Although our God will punish you forever in another world—in his prison—the doors of which open only to receive, we, unless you believe, will torment you now."

And then the members of these churches, led by priests, popes, and clergymen, sought out their unbelieving neighbors—chained

them in dungeons, stretched them on racks, crushed their bones, cut out their tongues, extinguished their eyes, flayed them alive and consumed their poor bodies in flames.

All this was done because these Christian savages believed in the dogma of eternal pain. Because they believed that heaven was the reward for belief. So believing, they were the enemies of free thought and speech —they cared nothing for conscience, nothing for the veracity of a soul,—nothing for the manhood of a man. In all ages most priests have been heartless and relentless. They have calumniated and tortured. In defeat they have crawled and whined. In victory they have killed. The flower of pity never blossomed in their hearts and in their brain. Justice never held aloft the scales. Now, they are not as cruel. They have lost their power, but they are still trying to accomplish the impossible. They fill their pockets with "fool's gold" and think they are rich. They stuff their minds with mistakes and think they

are wise. They console themselves with legends and myths, have faith in fiction and forgery—give their hearts to ghosts and phantoms and seek the aid of the non-existent.

They put a monster—a master—a tyrant in the sky, and seek to enslave their fellowmen. They teach the cringing virtues of serfs. They abhor the courage of manly men. They hate the man who thinks. They long for revenge.

They warm their hands at the imaginary fires of hell.

I show them that hell does not exist and they denounce me for destroying their consolation.

Horace Greeley, as the story goes, one cold day went into a country store, took a seat by the stove, unbuttoned his coat and spread out his hands.

In a few minutes, a little boy who clerked in the store said: "Mr. Greeley there aint no fire in that stove."

"You d—d little rascal," said Greeley, "what did you tell me for, I was getting real warm."

III.

"THE SCIENCE OF THEOLOGY."

ALL the sciences—except Theology—are eager for facts—hungry for the truth. On the brow of a finder of a fact the laurel is placed.

In a theological seminary, if a professor finds a fact inconsistent with the creed, he must keep it secret or deny it, or lose his place. Mental veracity is a crime, cowardice and hypocrisy are virtues.

A fact, inconsistent with the creed, is denounced as a lie, and the man who declares or announces the fact is a blasphemer. Every professor breathes the air of insincerity. Every one is mentally dishonest. Every one is a pious fraud. Theology is the only dishonest science—the only one that is based on belief—on credulity,—the only one that ab-

hors investigation, that despises thought and denounces reason.

All the great theologians in the Catholic church have denounced reason as the light furnished by the enemy of mankind—as the road that leads to perdition. All the great Protestant theologians, from Luther to the orthodox clergy of our time, have been the enemies of reason. All orthodox churches of all ages have been the enemies of science. They attacked the astronomers as though they were criminals — the geologists as though they were assassins. They regarded physicians as the enemies of God—as men who were trying to defeat the decrees of Providence. The biologists, the anthropologists, the archæologists, the readers of ancient inscriptions, the delvers in buried cities, were all hated by the theologians. They were afraid that these men might find something inconsistent with the Bible.

The theologian attacked those who studied other religions. They insisted that Christi-

anity was not a growth—not an evolution—but a revelation. They denied that it was in any way connected with any natural religion.

The facts now show beyond all doubt that all religions came from substantially the same source—but there is not an orthodox Christian theologian who will admit the facts. He must defend his creed—his revelation. He cannot afford to be honest. He was not educated in an honest school. He was not taught to be honest. He was taught to believe and to defend his belief, not only against argument but against facts.

There is not a theologian in the whole world who can produce the slightest, the least particle of evidence tending to show that the bible is the inspired word of God.

Where is the evidence that the book of Ruth was written by an inspired man? Where is the evidence that God is the author of the Song of Solomon? Where is the evidence that any human being has been in-

spired? Where is the evidence that Christ was and is God? Where is the evidence that the places called heaven and hell exist?—where is the evidence that a miracle was ever wrought?

There is none.

Theology is entirely independent of evidence.

Where is the evidence that angels and ghosts—that devils and gods exist? Have these beings been seen or touched? Does one of our senses certify to their existence?

The theologians depend on assertions. They have no evidence. They claim that their inspired book is superior to reason and independent of evidence.

They talk about probability—analogy—inferences—but they present no evidence. They say that they know that Christ lived, in the same way that they know that Cæsar lived. They might add that they know Moses talked with Jehovah on Sinai the same way they know that Brigham Young talked

with God in Utah. The evidence in both cases is the same,—none in either.

How do they prove that Christ rose from the dead? They find the account in a book. Who wrote the book? They do not know. What evidence is this? None, unless all things found in books are true.

It is impossible to establish one miracle except by another—and that would have to be established by another still, and so on without end. Human testimony is not sufficient to establish a miracle. Each human being, to be really convinced, must witness the miracle for himself.

They say that christianity was established —proven to be true by miracles wrought nearly two thousand years ago. Not one of these miracles can be established except by impudent and ignorant assertion—except by poisoning and deforming the minds of the ignorant and the young. To succeed, the theologians invade the cradle, the nursery. In the brain of innocence they plant the seeds of

superstition. They pollute the minds and imaginations of children. They frighten the happy with threats of pain—they soothe the wretched with gilded lies.

This perpetual insincerity stamps itself on the face—affects every feature. We all know the theological countenance,—cold, unsympathetic, cruel, lighted with a pious smirk,—no line of laughter—no dimpled mirth—no touch of humor—nothing human.

This face is a rebuke, a reprimand to natural joy. It says to the happy: "Beware of the dog"—"Prepare for death." This face, like the fabled Gorgon, turns cheerfulness to stone. It is a protest against pleasure—a warning and a threat.

You see every soul is a sculptor that fashions the features, and in this way reveals itself.

Every thought leaves its impress.

The student of this science of theology must be taught in youth,—in his mother's arms. These lies must be sown and planted

in his brain the first of all. He must be taught to believe, to accept without question. He must be told that it is wicked to doubt, that it is sinful to enquire—that Faith is a virtue and unbelief a crime.

In this way his mind is poisoned, paralyzed. On all other subjects he has liberty—and in all other directions he is urged to study and think. From his mother's arms he goes to the Sunday school. His poor little mind is filled with miracles and wonders. He is told about a God who made the world and who rewards and punishes. He is told that this God is the author of the Bible—that Christ is his son.—He is told about original sin and the atonement, and he believes what he hears. No reasons are given—no facts—no evidence is presented—nothing but assertion. If he asks questions, he is silenced by more solemn assertions and warned against the devices of the evil one. Every Sunday School is a kind of inquisition where they torture and deform the minds of children—where

they force their souls into Catholic or Protestant moulds—and do all they can to destroy the originality, the individuality, and the veracity of the soul. In the theological seminary the destruction is complete.

When the minister leaves the seminary, he is not seeking the truth. He has it. He has a revelation from God, and he has a creed in exact accordance with that revelation. His business is to stand by that revelation and to defend that creed. Arguments against the revelation and the creed he will not read, he will not hear. All facts that are against his religion he will deny. It is impossible for him to be candid. The tremendous "verities" of eternal joy, of everlasting pain are in his creed, and they result from believing the false and denying the true.

Investigation is an infinite danger, unbelief is an infinite offence and deserves and will receive infinite punishment. In the shadow of this tremendous "fact" his courage

dies, his manhood is lost, and in his fear he cries out that he believes, whether he does or not.

He says and teaches that credulity is safe and thought dangerous. Yet he pretends to be a teacher—a leader, one selected by God to educate his fellowmen.

These orthodox ministers have been the slanderers of the really great men of our century. They denounced Lyell, the great geologist, for giving facts to the world. They hated and belittled Humboldt, one of the greatest and most intellectual of the race. They ridiculed and derided Darwin, the greatest naturalist, the keenest observer, the best judge of the value of a fact, the most wonderful discoverer of truth that the world has produced.

In every orthodox pulpit stood a traducer of the greatest of scientists—of one who filled the world with intellectual light.

The church has been the enemy of every science, of every real thinker, and for many

centuries has used her power to prevent intellectual progress.

Ministers ought to be free. They should be the heralds of the ever coming day, but they are the bats, the owls that inhabit ruins, that hate the light. They denounce honest men who express their thoughts, as blasphemers, and do what they can to close their mouths. For their bible they ask the protection of law. They wish to be shielded from laughter by the legislature. They ask that the arguments of their opponents be answered by the courts. This is the result of a due admixture of cowardice, hypocrisy and malice.

What valuable fact has been proclaimed from an orthodox pulpit? What ecclesiastical council has added to the intellectual wealth of the world?

Many centuries ago the church gave to Christendom a code of laws, stupid, unphilosophic and brutal to the last degree.

The church insists that it has made man

merciful and just. Did it do this by torturing heretics—by extinguishing their eyes—by flaying them alive? Did it accomplish this result through the Inquisition—by the use of the thumb-screw, the rack and the fagot? Of what science has the church been the friend and champion? What orthodox church has opened its doors to a persecuted truth? Of what use has Christianity been to man?

They tell us that the church has been and is the friend of education. I deny it. The church founded colleges not to educate men, but to make proselytes, converts, defenders. This was in accordance with the instinct of self-preservation. No orthodox church ever was, or ever will be in favor of real education. A Catholic is in favor of enough education to make a Catholic out of a savage, and the Protestant is in favor of enough education to make a Protestant out of a Catholic, but both are opposed to the education that makes free and manly men.

So, ministers say that they teach charity. This is natural. They live on alms. All beggars teach that others should give.

So, they tell us that the church has built hospitals. This is not true. Men have not built hospitals because they were Christians, but because they were men. They have not built them for charity—but in self-defence.

If a man comes to your door with the small-pox, you cannot let him in, you cannot kill him. As a necessity, you provide a place for him. And you do this to protect yourself. With this Christianity has had nothing to do.

The church cannot give, because it does not produce. It is claimed that the church has made men and women forgiving. I admit that the church has preached forgiveness, but it has never forgiven an enemy—never. Against the great and brave thinkers it has coined and circulated countless lies. Never has the church told, or tried to tell, the truth about an honest foe.

The church teaches the existence of the supernatural. It believes in the divine sleight-of-hand—in the "presto" and "open sesame" of the Infinite; in some invisible Being who produces effects without causes and causes without effects; whose caprice governs the world and who can be persuaded by prayer, softened by ceremony, and who will, as a reward for faith, save men from the natural consequences of their actions.

The church denies the eternal, inexorable sequence of events.

What Good has the Church Accomplished?

It claims to have preached peace because its founder said, "I came not to bring peace but a sword."

It claims to have preserved the family because its founder offered a hundred-fold here and life everlasting to those who would desert wife and children.

So, it claims to have taught the brother-

hood of man and that the gospel is for all the world, because Christ said to the woman of Samaria that he came only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and declared that it was not meet to take the bread of the children and cast it unto dogs.

In the name of Christ, who threatened eternal revenge, it has preached forgiveness.

Of what Use are the Orthodox Ministers?

They are the enemies of pleasure. They denounce dancing as one of the deadly sins. They are shocked at the wickedness of the waltz—the pollution of the polka. They are the enemies of the theatre. They slander actors and actresses. They hate them because they are rivals. They are trying to preserve the sacredness of the Sabbath. It fills them with malice to see the people happy on that day. They preach against excursions and picnics—against those who

seek the woods and the sea, the shadows and the waves. They are filled with holy wrath against bicycles and bloomers. They are opposed to divorces. They insist that for the glory of God husbands and wives who loathe each other should be compelled to live together. They abhor all works of fiction, and love the bible. They declare that the literary masterpieces of the world are unfit to be read. They think that the people should be satisfied with sermons and poems about death and hell. They hate art—abhor the marbles of the Greeks, and all representations of the human form. They want nothing painted or sculptured but hands, faces and clothes. Most of the priests are prudes, and publicly denounce what they secretly admire and enjoy. In the presence of the nude they cover their faces with their holy hands, but keep their fingers apart. They pretend to believe in moral suasion, and want everything regulated by law. If they had the power, they would prohibit everything that men and women really enjoy. They want libraries, museums and art galleries closed on the Sab-

bath. They would abolish the Sunday paper —stop the running of cars and all public conveyances on the holy day, and compel all the people to enjoy sermons, prayers and psalms.

These dear ministers, when they have poor congregations, thunder against trusts, syndicates, and corporations—against wealth, fashion and luxury. They tell about Dives and Lazarus, paint rich men in hell and beggars in heaven. If their congregations are rich they turn their guns in the other direction.

They have no confidence in education—in the development of the brain. They appeal to hopes and fears. They ask no one to think—to investigate. They insist that all shall believe. Credulity is the greatest of virtues, and doubt the deadliest of sins.

These men are the enemies of science—of intellectual progress. They ridicule and calumniate the great thinkers. They deny everything that conflicts with the "sacred

scriptures." They still believe in the astronomy of Joshua and the geology of Moses. They believe in the miracles of the past, and deny the demonstrations of the present. They are the foes of facts—the enemies of knowledge. A desire to be happy here, they regard as wicked and worldly—but a desire to be happy in another world, as virtuous and spiritual.

Every orthodox church is founded on mistake and falsehood. Every good orthodox minister asserts what he does not know, and denies what he does know.

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What harm are they doing?

On every hand they sow the seeds of superstition. They paralyze the minds, and pollute the imaginations of children. They fill their hearts with fear. By their teachings, thousands become insane. With them, hy-

pocrisy is respectable and candor infamous. They enslave the minds of men. Under their teachings men waste and misdirect their energies, abandon the ends that can be accomplished, dedicate their lives to the impossible, worship the unknown, pray to the inconceivable, and become the trembling slaves of a monstrous myth born of ignorance and fashioned by the trembling hands of fear.

Superstition is the serpent that crawls and hisses in every Eden and fastens its poisonous fangs in the hearts of men.

It is the deadliest foe of the human race.

Superstition is a beggar—a robber, a tyrant.

Science is a benefactor.

Superstition sheds blood.

Science sheds light.

The dear preachers must give up the account of creation—the Garden of Eden, the mud-man, the rib-woman, and the walking, talking, snake. They must throw away the

apple, the fall of man, the expulsion and the gate guarded by angels armed with swords. They must give up the flood and the tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues. They must give up Abraham and the wrestling match between Jacob and the Lord. So, the story of Joseph, the enslavement of the Hebrews by the Egyptians, the story of Moses in the bullrushes, the burning bush, the turning of sticks into serpents, of water into blood, the miraculous creation of frogs, the killing of cattle with hail and changing dust into lice, all must be given up. The sojourn of forty years in the desert, the opening of the Red Sea, the clothes and shoes that refused to wear out, the manna, the quails and the serpents, the water that ran up hill, the talking of Jehovah with Moses, face to face,—the giving of the Ten Commandments; the opening of the earth to swallow the enemies of Moses—all must be thrown away.

These good preachers must admit that

blowing horns could not throw down the walls of a city—that it was horrible for Jepthah to sacrifice his daughter—that the day was not lengthened and the moon stopped for the sake of Joshua,—that the dead Samuel was not raised by a witch—that a man was not carried to heaven in a chariot of fire, that the river Jordan was not divided by the stroke of a cloak, that the bears did not destroy children for laughing at a prophet, that a wandering soothsayer did not collect lightnings from heaven to destroy the lives of innocent men;—that he did not cause rain and make iron float—that ravens did not keep a hotel where preachers got board and lodging free, that the shadow on a dial was not turned back ten degrees to show that a king was going to recover from a boil—that Ezekiel was not told by God how to prepare a dinner—that Jonah did not take cabin passage in a fish—and that all the miracles in the old Testament are not allegories, or poems, but just old-fashioned lies. And

the dear preachers will be compelled to admit that there never was a miraculous babe without a natural father, that Christ if he lived, was a man and nothing more. That he did not cast devils out of folks—that he did not cure blindness with spittle and clay, nor turn water into wine, nor make fishes and loaves of bread out of nothing—that he did not know where to catch fishes with money in their mouths—that he did not take a walk on the water—that he did not at will become invisible—that he did not pass through closed doors—that he did not raise the dead—that angels never rolled stones from a sepulchre—that Christ did not rise from the dead and did not ascend to heaven.

All these mistakes, and illusions and delusions—all these miracles and myths must fade from the minds of intelligent men.

My dear preachers, I beg you to tell the truth. Tell your congregations that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch. Tell them that nobody knows who wrote the five

books. Tell them that Deuteronomy was not written until about six hundred years before Christ. Tell them that nobody knows who wrote Joshua, or Judges or Ruth, Samuel, Kings, or Chronicles, Job or the Psalms, or the Song of Solomon. Be honest, tell the truth. Tell them that nobody knows who wrote Esther—that Ecclesiastes was written long after Christ—that many of the prophecies were written after the events pretended to be foretold had happened. Tell them that Ezekiel and Daniel were insane. Tell them that nobody knows who wrote the gospels, and tell them that no line about Christ written by a cotemporary has been found. Tell them that it is all guess—and may be and perhaps—be honest. Tell the truth, develop your brains, use all your senses and hold high the torch of Reason.

In a few years the pulpits will be filled with teachers instead of preachers—with thoughtful, brave, and honest men. The congregations will be civilized—intellectually honest and hospitable.

Now, most of the ministers insist that the old falsehoods shall be treated with reverence —that ancient lies with long white beards— wrinkled and bald headed frauds—round-shouldered and toothless miracles, and palsied mistakes on crutches, shall be called allegories, parables, oriental imagery, inspired poems. In their presence the ungodly should remove their hats. They should respect the mould and moss of antiquity. They should remember that these lies, these frauds, the miracles and mistakes, have for thousands of years ruled, enslaved, and corrupted the human race.

These ministers ought to know that their creeds are based on imagined facts and demonstrated by assertion.

They ought to know that they have no evidence.—Nothing but promises and threats. They ought to know that it is impossible to conceive of force existing without and before matter—that it is equally impossible to conceive of matter without force—that it is im-

possible to conceive of the creation or destruction of matter or force,—that it is impossible to conceive of infinite intelligence dwelling from eternity in infinite space, and that it is impossible to conceive of the creator, or creation, of substance.

The God of the Christian is an enthroned guess—a perhaps—an inference.

No man, and no body of men, can answer the questions of the Whence and Whither. The mystery of existence cannot be explained by the intellect of man.

Back of life, of existence, we cannot go—beyond death we cannot see. All duties, all obligations, all knowledge, all experience, are for this life, for this world.

We know that men and women and children exist. We know that happiness, for the most part, depends on conduct.

We are satisfied that all the gods are phantoms and that the supernatural does not exist.

We know the difference between hope and knowledge, we hope for happiness here and

we dream of joy hereafter, but we do not know, we cannot assert, we can only hope, we can have our dream. In the wide night our star can shine and shed its radiance on the graves of those we love, we can bend above our pallid dead and say, that beyond this life there are no sighs—no tears—no breaking hearts.

CONCLUSION.

LET us be honest. Let us preserve the veracity of our souls. Let education commence in the cradle—in the lap of the loving mother. This is the first school. The teacher, the mother, should be absolutely honest.

The nursery should not be an asylum for lies.

Parents should be modest enough to be truthful—honest enough to admit their ignorance. Nothing should be taught as true that cannot be demonstrated.

Every child should be taught to doubt, to enquire, to demand reasons. Every soul should defend itself—should be on its guard against falsehood, deceit, and mistake, and should beware of all kinds of confidence men, including those in the pulpit.

Children should be taught to express their doubts—to demand reasons. The object of education should be to develop the brain, to quicken the senses. Every school should be a mental gymnasium. The child should be equipped for the battle of life. Credulity, implicit obedience, are the virtues of slaves and the enslavers of the free. All should be taught that there is nothing too sacred to be investigated—too holy to be understood.

Each mind has the right to lift all curtains, withdraw all veils, scale all walls, explore all recesses, all heights, all depths for itself, in spite of church or priest, or creed or book.

The great volume of Nature should be open to all. None but the intelligent and honest can really read this book. Prejudice clouds and darkens every page. Hypocrisy reads and misquotes, and credulity accepts the quotation. Superstition cannot read a line or spell the shortest word. And yet this

volume holds all knowledge—all truth, and is the only source of thought. Mental liberty means the right of all to read this book. Here the Pope and Peasant are equal. Each must read for himself—and each ought to honestly and fearlessly give to his fellowmen what he learns.

There is no authority in churches or priests—no authority in numbers or majorities. The only authority is Nature—the facts we know. Facts are the masters, the enemies of the ignorant, the servants and friends of the intelligent.

Ignorance is the mother of mystery and misery, of superstition and sorrow, of waste and want.

Intelligence is the only light. It enables us to keep the highway, to avoid the obstructions, and to take advantage of the forces of nature. It is the only lever capable of raising mankind. To develop the brain is to civilize the world. Intelligence reaves the heavens of winged and frightful monsters—

drives ghosts and leering fiends from the darkness, and floods with light the dungeons of fear.

All should be taught that there is no evidence of the existence of the supernatural—that the man who bows before an idol of wood or stone is just as foolish as the one who prays to an imagined God,—that all worship has for its foundation the same mistake—the same ignorance, the same fear—that it is just as foolish to believe in a personal god as in a personal devil—just as foolish to believe in great ghosts as little ones.

So, all should be taught that the forces, the facts in Nature, cannot be controlled or changed by prayer or praise, by supplication, ceremony, or sacrifice—that there is no magic, no miracle, that force can be overcome only by force, and that the whole world is natural.

All should be taught that man must protect himself—that there is no power superior to Nature that cares for man—that Nature

has neither pity nor hatred—that her forces act without the slightest regard for man—that she produces without intention and destroys without regret.

All should be taught that usefulness is the bud and flower and fruit of real religion. The popes and cardinals, the bishops, priests and parsons are all useless. They produce nothing. They live on the labor of others. They are parasites that feed on the frightened. They are vampires that suck the blood of honest toil. Every church is an organized beggar. Every one lives on alms—on alms collected by force and fear. Every orthodox church promises heaven and threatens hell and these promises and threats are made for the sake of alms, for revenue. Every church cries "Believe and give." A new era is

A new era is dawning on the world. We are beginning to believe in the religion of usefulness.

The men who felled the forests, cultivated the earth, spanned the rivers with bridges of steel, built the railways and canals, the

great ships—invented the locomotives and engines, supplying the countless wants of man. The men who invented the telegraphs and cables, and freighted the electric spark with thought and love. The men who invented the looms and spindles that clothe the world, the inventors of printing and the great presses that fill the earth with poetry, fiction and fact, that save and keep all knowledge for the children yet to be. The inventors of all the wonderful machines that deftly mould from wood and steel the things we use. The men who have explored the heavens and traced the orbits of the stars—who have read the story of the world in mountain range and billowed sea. The men who have lengthened life and conquered pain. The great philosophers and naturalists who have filled the world with light. The great poets whose thoughts have charmed the souls, the great painters and sculptors who have made the canvas speak, the marble live. The great

orators who have swayed the world, the composers who have given their souls to sound, the captains of industry, the producers, the soldiers who have battled for the right, the vast host of useful men. These are our Christs, our apostles and our saints. The triumphs of science are our miracles. The books filled with the facts of Nature are our sacred scriptures, and the force that is in every atom and in every star—in everything that lives and grows and thinks, that hopes and suffers, is the only possible god.

The absolute we cannot know—beyond the horizon of the Natural we cannot go. All our duties are within our reach—all our obligations must be discharged here, in this world. Let us love and labor—Let us wait and work. Let us cultivate courage and cheerfulness—open our hearts to the good—our minds to the true. Let us live free lives. Let us hope that the future will bring peace and joy to all the children of men, and above all, let us preserve the veracity of our souls.

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